

As Edgewater Gets Older, Need For Affordable Housing Grows, Officials Say

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From left to right, panelists Elizabeth Irvin, Jacky Grimshaw and Ald. Harry Osterman (48th) spoke with Edgewater community members Tuesday on the neighborhood's changing demographics.

DNAinfo/Linze Rice

EDGEWATER — Edgewater is getting old — or older, at least.

That's according to neighborhood officials who gave a "State of Edgewater" presentation Tuesday.

While in 1970 most of the neighborhood's residents were under 35, today the largest growing segment of the population are those in the 45-55 age range, said Elizabeth Irvin of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. That makes developments with affordable units essential, especially near public transportation like Edgewater's four "L" stops, she said.

The aging of Edgewater comes as the neighborhood has seen a drop in population since 2000 of about 7,000 people. Today the community has [a little more than 55,000 residents](#), including the growing middle-age and senior populations, according to census data.

That's both a challenge and an opportunity for local businesses and developers, speakers said.

Steve Satek, owner of Great Lakes Clinical Trials, said his Alzheimer's disease research business is a great

resource for Edgewater's aging residents, but most of his clients travel in from outside the neighborhood.

The shift in demographics has also changed the area's housing market.

As development in the neighborhood booms, in particular along Broadway and Sheridan, panelists said balanced affordability was needed to keep Edgewater from pricing out its long-time residents and those aging into retirement — something Ald. Harry Osterman (48th) said was an "unfortunate byproduct of when neighborhoods improve."

Grimshaw stressed the importance of "transit-oriented developments" close to public transportation, which offer little or no parking to encourage the use of public transit over car ownership, and city rules that require all developers proposing new projects to either set aside a portion of new units at a reduced rate for low-income residents or pay into a city fund.

Osterman said it was a give-and-take when working with developers, but that he supported keeping the affordable units in the Edgewater neighborhood to help maintain the area's demographic diversity.

Two upcoming developments, a senior high-rise called the Overture Edgewater and the millennial-gearred 6145 N. Broadway, both include plans with at least 10 percent of units set aside as affordable.

"People want to be here," Osterman said. "In the future as how we develop our neighborhood, it's how we provide housing and increase housing ... and that's a critical thing. But the reality is that people who develop buildings are in it for business purposes.

"We are pro-growth, I want developments, but I want it on the terms of the people in our community," Osterman said.

Transit-oriented developments benefit neighbors across the age spectrum, especially when it comes to the high demand for walkability, according to Grimshaw. Forty-five percent of the area's younger residents don't have a car, either, she added.

CTA ridership in the neighborhood has also seen an 18.3 percent jump since 2000, though the household population surrounding those Red Line "L" stops — Berwyn, Bryn Mawr, Thorndale and Granville — has decreased by about 9 percent, Grimshaw added.

Development and affordable housing along the CTA is necessary to suit the changing needs of the neighborhood's aging population and economic growth, Osterman said, but it also requires residents embrace and not resist the concept of "affordable housing" as other areas of the city have.

"I think our community has matured past those arguments," Osterman said. "I think the best thing we can do is kind of lead by example."